



The President's Daily Brief

28 October 1969



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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

President Hilu is now faced with decisions that may determine Lebanon's survival. (Page 1)

Prime Minister Gorton has only a slight edge as the counting of ballots continues in Australia. (Page 2)

The USSR and Communist China are engaged in long and arduous talks about the border. (Page 3)

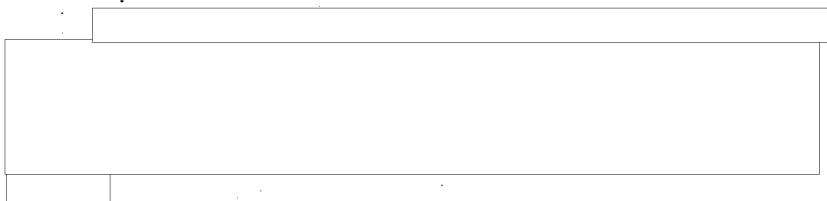
More trouble is in store for Kenya as tribal antipathies rise. (Page 4)

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LEBANON

The fighting between the army and the fedayeen has been reduced to occasional sporadic outbursts, and the attention of most of the Arab leaders is turning to the mediation conference in Cairo. Fedayeen leader Yasir Arafat reportedly offered yesterday to effect a cease-fire until the conference disbands.



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Although his army and the majority of his people are still loyal, President Hili is facing an increasingly bitter choice. Ambassador Porter believes he must either compromise with the fedayeen or resign. If he were to choose to fight it out against the domestic and foreign forces that threaten him, as the ambassador sees it, the result would be the destruction of Lebanon.

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AUSTRALIA

Returns from Australia's elections on Saturday point toward the continuation in office of the Liberal-Country coalition with the slimmest of majorities--one to four seats. The outcome depends both on absentee ballots, which will take several more days to count, and on the tallying of "second-preference" votes in districts where the voters' first-choice candidate failed to get enough votes for election.

Gorton obviously has suffered a severe setback. Among almost certain casualties is External Affairs Minister Gordon Freeth, who is close to Gorton. Freeth's speech last August implying approval of a Soviet presence in Southeast Asia confused the traditionally vote-getting anti-Communist issue and was responsible for some of the government's losses.

The 8 percent swing to the Australian Labor Party has revitalized that party, and, failing victory, it can at least be expected to take the offensive against a broad spectrum of government policy. Labor leader Gough Whitlam, a moderate, has scored a personal triumph and is in a strengthened position to do battle with the left in his own party.

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USSR - COMMUNIST CHINA

Soviet leaders concede that the border talks will be long and arduous, but they have been attempting to convey an optimistic attitude in discussions with foreign officials. Kosygin told French Foreign Minister Schumann earlier this month that Moscow desired to use the talks as a step toward more normal relations. Brezhnev presented a similarly conciliatory thesis in a speech to visiting Czechoslovaks yesterday.

Polemical propaganda from both sides has diminished, although the Chinese still attack such Soviet policies as negotiations with the US on the seabeds treaty.

The Soviets have not yet replied to the strong statement on the border issue the Chinese let fly on 8 October. Silence does not mean forgiveness, however. A Soviet Foreign Ministry official is reported to have told a foreign diplomat recently that Moscow fully intends to answer China's "false and slanderous statements," once the Kremlin has decided on the format.

The Soviet leaders have negotiations of various kinds going on or pending with a number of Western nations, and they understand the benefits of demonstrating their businesslike and even charitable attitude. Lack of use is unlikely to dull their skill at invective, however, and the decision on the "format" of their reply to the Chinese statement will come easily if the talks in Peking turn sour.

The Chinese have displayed little regard for the Western practice of image building, but on the border issue, at least, they have more to lose than the USSR if they permit the dispute to be resolved by force. Thus, it is understandable that they do not want to be disruptive to the point of causing the Soviet leaders to call their negotiating team back to Moscow.

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KENYA

The Kikuyu-dominated government of President Jomo Kenyatta has arrested all leaders of the opposition Kenya People's Union. The government claims that these men, most of whom are Luo tribesmen, were responsible for the disturbances that marred Kenyatta's goodwill tour of Luo areas over the past weekend. As many as a dozen people were killed on Saturday when security troops opened fire on Luos who were throwing rocks at the President.

This overreaction to the incidents is certain to widen the rift between Kenya's two largest tribes. The Luo were already bitter because they suspect Kikuyu leaders of plotting the assassination of the Luos' fellow tribesman, Tom Mboya.

In addition to further violence, there may be longer-range effects. The armed forces chief has recently been critical of the government's handling of tribal relations, and his dissatisfaction could eventually lead him to move against the government.

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NOTES

USSR - Vietnam Peace Groups: Nguyen Minh Vy of the North Vietnamese delegation to the Paris peace talks was among the 40-odd participants at the meeting of the "Liaison Committee of the Stockholm Peace Conference on Vietnam" on 10-11 October.

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Warsaw Pact: Warsaw Pact consultations on preparations for a European Security Conference will begin on Thursday in Prague, according to an announcement from Budapest. The meeting, which probably will be at the deputy foreign minister's level, apparently has been scheduled to take the play away from a similar gathering of NATO deputy foreign ministers on 5-6 November. Earlier reports from Eastern European sources that such a meeting was in the wind indicated that the Warsaw Pact powers are planning to issue a new appeal on European security.

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Surinam: Saturday's election has reversed the political scene, and the anticipated new government will be made up from two parties that were in the opposition before the corrupt Pengel administration was forced out of office last February. The incoming administration, considerably more liberal than Pengel's was, will be faced with several important decisions, including determination of the pace of independence, the settlement of the border dispute with Guyana, and the pursuit of solutions to a multitude of vexing economic problems.

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